



OFFICIALS ARTICLE

'Play by the Rules'

www.playbytherules.net.au

A young 16 year old boy is umpiring a junior football game. He is inexperienced and is not feeling very confident. The teams are competing vigorously and it's a close game - the parents are behaving as though they are 'playing for sheep stations'. The spectators heckle the umpire who makes mistakes under the pressure of the abuse from the crowd and players. Tempers flare on and off the field and the game ends with the threat of reporting the umpire.

Does this sound familiar?

The abuse of officials and the incidence of sport rage is of increasing concern to sport. It is becoming more and more difficult to attract and retain officials to the game, particularly at club level, and many of our up and coming umpires are young and inexperienced. While we know that the vast majority of people involved in sport are well behaved there are those that are disrespectful of the game and the important role that officials play.

The sport's industry, Australian Sports Commission and state/territory departments for sport and recreation have taken seriously the need to address the issue of abuse of officials. The 2003 'Year of The Official' education campaign was a successful campaign that effectively communicated the message "Time to Respect the Official" to the community. Many National and State sport associations have also undertaken initiatives to recruit, foster the development of and retain officials.

It can be difficult for clubs to have the time and resources to deal with the issue of abuse of officials and other inappropriate behaviour. 'Play By The Rules' www.playbytherules.net.au provides free information, resources and training for busy clubs to prevent and manage inappropriate, undesirable and potentially unlawful behaviour. This information should help guide officials in their assessment of what they can and cannot say and do when dealing with players in a game. However, most importantly, it will give them some information about their rights.

Go to the 'Play By The Rules' website and see how it can help your club deal with discrimination, harassment and abuse.